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BOLIVIA: New Government's Prospects

Bolivia's new government will enjoy only a temporary respite from the coup plotting that undermined former President Guevara, who had only been in office since early August.

Military units and commanders have pledged their loyalty to coup leader Colonel Alberto Natusch Busch, but the armed forces remain divided along generational and ideological lines. End-of-year retirements and unit rotations, however, will enable Natusch to keep officers in line, at least temporarily.

A major test for Natusch will involve his treatment of former President Banzer, who enjoys widespread support among conservative civilians and the military. Before yesterday's takeover, Banzer had been actively plotting a return to power. At a press conference yesterday, Banzer offered qualified support to the new government.

Several civilians are in the Cabinet sworn in last night, but the military has retained the most important portfolios. Natusch and his associates claim they will set a date for general elections and respect the rights of the Congress and the labor unions. Criticism of the new government by leftist parties in the Congress last night and expressions of support for deposed President Guevara may provoke a sharp response from Natusch. In a press conference, Natusch justified the overthrow on the grounds of forestalling leftist penetration of the government and curbing Guevara's alleged antidemocratic tendencies, assertions that are false and misleading.

Civilian reaction to the coup has thus far been negligible. Although the leftist Bolivian Labor Central has called for a 24-hour general strike today to protest the takeover, labor and military leaders apparently want to avoid a confrontation at this time. Militants in the labor movement are aware that the government would use repressive measures to maintain its hold on power. For their part, the new military rulers want to quiet adverse international reaction and ensure that sensitive negotiations with international lending institutions are not jeopardized.

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